THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

of

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

presents

# EXPLORATIONS

Sunday, February 11, 1973, at 8:30 p.m.

Convocation Hall, Arts Building

## Dido and Aeneas ..... Henry Purcell

adapted by Benjamin Britten and Imogen Holst

Overture

Act 1: Scene 1 - The Palace

Scene 2 - The Witches' Cave

Act III: The Ships

Time: After the fall of Troy

Place: Carthage

The Collegium Musicum, Dale McIntosh, director
Wendy Grasdal, assistant conductor
Andrea Mellis, harpsichord
Joanne Ludbrook, violoncello

Dido, Queen of Carthage—Barbara Prowse
Aeneas, a Trojan Prince—Nigel Lemon
Belinda, Lady in Waiting—Pauline LeBel
Sorceress—Marilyn Verbicky
First Witch—Betty Kolodziej
Second Witch—Nancy Browne
Sailor—David Speers

Chorus of Courtiers, Witches and Sailors: Randy Bain, Zdenka Berka, Chris Bouey, Valerie Buzzeo, Marianne Carefoot, Avaleigh Crockett, Elaine Dobek, Jack Dowling, Dawn Drews, Wayne Feschuk, Marnie Giesbrecht, Susan Goodwin, Colleen Goodrich, Robert Hallam, JoEllen Harris, Peter Higham, Mary Hill, Jacqueline Krahn, Marnie Lester, Beth MacIntosh, Michael May, Sharilyn McCormick, Norman Miller, Barbara Morris, Laurence Pellizzari, Linda Prentice, Ronald Proctor, Janice Renaud, Patricia Rhein, Lorraine Robinson, Vern Roth, Rita Smyth, Tom Smyth, Audrey Strain, Chris Taylor, Patricia Wilson, Halina Wrobel, Roberta Zasadny

Orchestra: Allyn Chard, Frantisek Cikanek, Donna Daly, Robert Hryciw, Miyo Inouye, Denis Letourneau, James Mahood, Sylvia Maltby, Barbara McLean, Susanne Zeindler

Echo Chorus: Members of Grace United Church Choir

## Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 11, No. 4 (1922) ..... Paul Hindemith

Fantasie
Thema mit Variationen
Finale (mit Variationen)

Michael Bowie, viola
Helmut Brauss, piano

INTERMISSION

## Trio in E flat major, Op. 40 ..... Johannes Brahms

Andante
Scherzo
Adagio mesto
Allegro con brio

Lawrence Fisher, violin
John Iltis, French horn
Ernesto Lejano, piano

# PROGRAM NOTES

Dido and Aeneas may be considered to be the first truly great English opera. It was written by Henry Purcell in 1689 and first performed at a girls' school in Chelsea (London) the same year. The school was run by a dancing master, one Josias Priest, who evidently had some influence in artistic circles for he was not only able to commission an opera from "the glory of English music," but was also successful in obtaining the services of England's poet laureate, Nahum Tate, as librettist. While Tate might not have been a great poet, he was able to produce a plausible libretto on a classic tale of passion and death, and adapt it suitably for presentation with a large female cast.

Dido is on the scale of a chamber opera rather than a full stage work, but otherwise it resembles its Italian counterparts. One of its most distinctive features is Purcell's effective use of the arioso recitative, which has little in common with the more traditional secco style. The broadness of expression possible with the arioso allows Purcell to maintain a clearly organized structure without sacrificing either proper vocal inflection or affective nuances; a difficult task with the English language. He is thus able to achieve a genuine dramatic dialogue which gives strength and unity to the work. The entire role of Aeneas, for instance, is sung in arioso style, yet loses none of its dramatic impetus or cohesiveness.

Following a short overture in the French style, we find Dido and Belinda in a room of the palace. Aeneas, the Trojan hero, has been cast up on the shores of Carthage after the fall of Troy, and Dido has become aware of a love for this man which she is not willing to admit. Belinda persuades Dido that her love for Aeneas should not be concealed, and when, toward the end of the scene, he pleads his own case, it becomes clear that Belinda's advice has had no little effect on Dido's decision. With the further urging of the chorus (which seems to be forever present, even at the most intimate of domestic conferences) and Belinda ("Pursue thy conquest, love"), the die is cast.

In the second scene we meet the villains. These include a sorceress, a pair of head witches, and a whole chorus of assistant witches and warlocks. That this group bears a direct physical resemblance to the courtiers of the previous scene seemed to make little difference to the Baroque dramatist. In their cave they are busy planning to ". . . conjure up a storm" in order to "drive 'em" [Dido and her followers] "back to court." This, of course, is the beginning of a plot to separate Dido and Aeneas, and to make the hero desert the heroine. The first act ends with the familiar echo-chorus, "In our deep-vaulted cell," descriptive of the bleak surroundings.

The second act, which is not presented in this performance, deals with the hunt that Queen Dido has arranged for the entertainment of her distinguished guest. When Dido and the ladies are driven off by the storm devised by the witches, Aeneas is kept from joining them by a mysterious spirit (also a product of the witches' plan) who tells Aeneas that he must leave Dido that very night, for he is destined to found the great city of Rome. The act closes with the witches rejoicing that their plans are succeeding.

A chorus of Trojan sailors delightedly preparing to leave the hospitable shores of Carthage (". . . take a bouzy short leave of your nymphs on the shore," yet) opens the last act. This joyous leave-taking is followed by the inevitable entrance of the witches, who are even more delighted as they sing "Our plot has took, the Queen's forsook." When the tragic Dido enters the action she is completely resigned to her fate, and even when Aeneas offers to defy the commands of Jove and to remain with her, she adamantly insists upon being deserted by her lover. The opera closes with the classic aria, "When I am laid in earth," and the touching chorus, "With drooping wings."

—D. M.

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Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) was one of the most eminent living examples of the ideal of comprehensive musicianship. Strongly championed by him, this ideal has led to the breaking down of many of the artificial distinctions formerly drawn between the activities of composer, performer, theorist, historian, and teacher—capacities in all of which Hindemith excelled.

Hindemith's Opus 11, published in 1922, comprises sonatas for varying instruments. It evidences both his interest in composing chamber music and his view that each new work need not be presented as an individual monument. Although Hindemith had until the early 1920's made his living primarily as a violinist, his growing concern with composition coincided with a change to the viola as his principal performing medium. During the 1920's, he acquired a reputation as a musical radical; but the streaks of parody and pungent dissonance that made Hindemith notorious among musical conservatives of that generation are not to be heard in this sonata. If anything, the idiom of the piece recalls the string writing of French composers like Franck, Debussy, and Fauré.

The three movements of the sonata are played without pause. The relatively short first movement is a fantasy growing out of a broad, tranquil opening theme. The second and third movements are (according to Hindemith) to be conceived as a single musical progression. Both are based on the same theme, first stated "calmly and simply, like a folksong." Four variations are given in the second movement, leading directly into a looser developmental passage at the head of the third movement, after which come three more variations of the same theme. Of all the variations in the two movements, only the second (a capriccio) hints at Hindemith's ironic turn of mind, and only the sixth (a fugato) indulges in the harmonic brutalities favored by various composers during the postwar years of the 1920's. Otherwise, the work is imbued with a prevailing lyricism befitting the viola.

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The Trio for Piano, Violin, and Horn, Op. 40, is motivated in part by certain external circumstances of Brahms' life. He played the horn himself and felt a special affinity for its sound. The common association of the instrument with pastoral or hunting scenes is borne out by Brahms' assertion that he conceived the opening theme of the work while walking in the Black Forest. Furthermore, the tender mood that characterizes much of the trio is generally acknowledged to reflect Brahms' deeply felt reaction to his mother's death some months before he composed the piece in 1865.

Like many other composers of his time, Brahms emphasizes the lyrical potential of the horn. He insisted on writing this trio for the old-fashioned valveless horn, which was hard to control and limited in the notes it could produce, but offered a purity of tone highly prized by Brahms. The capabilities of the natural horn influence the qualities of the themes heard in the piece, as well as other aspects of musical structure. But the horn part—perhaps the most subordinate of the three in the ensemble—is most important for the particular sound color and mood it produces. (It is difficult to understand how Brahms' publisher could have been so insensitive as to insist on the composition of an alternate part for cello to replace the horn, thereby fitting the piece for a more standard chamber ensemble.)

The opening movement is not the usual fast sonata-form movement, but a gently flowing andante including two slightly more animated episodes. While the opening and closing scherzo portions of the second movement drive forward with characteristic élan, the central trio section turns to a much darker cast in both key and tempo. Brahms gives full vent to the latter mood in the slow third movement, near the end of which one hears a premonition of the theme of the last movement. This link helps to bridge the gap into the finale, whose straightforward vivacity seems to lift the veil that lies over the first three movements. This very lightness, following three more serious movements, imparts to the final movement a special significance that might in other circumstances be gained by writing some sort of grand apotheosizing conclusion.

—W. K.